Rourke Ranch, CO          October 1 - 6, 2017

PROJECT PARTNER: Cimarron and Comanche
National Grasslands

PROJECT SITE DESCRIPTION:
The beautiful Picketwire Canyon saw a great deal of growth and settlement in the 1870s. In 1871, Eugene and Mary Rourke homesteaded 40 acres on the banks of the Purgatoire River; so began Rourke Ranch. The cattle and horse ranch grew through three generations of Rourkes to over 50,000 acres before being sold out of the family 100 years later in 1971. In its day, Rourke Ranch was one of the most successful ranches in Colorado. The quality workmanship and architecture of
its adobe buildings can still be seen and has earned Rourke Ranch a place on the National Register of Historic Places. Today, Rourke Ranch is preserved by the Comanche National Grassland as a testament to the hardy pioneers that helped settle the west and is well worth the time to visit.

A first time visitor to the Comanche National Grassland is usually surprised to find such a varied landscape from rolling short grass prairies to rugged canyons rimmed by pinion-juniper forests. It encompasses a fascinating landscape that reveals the history of the region in its exposed rock layers of prehistoric sea beds and ancient lakeshores riddled with dinosaur tracks. Cultural sites in the grasslands represent a diverse history spanning thousands of years. These vast expanses and hidden canyons were once the home to Native Americans who left their messages in the form of petroglyphs and pictographs on the cliff faces and rock overhangs throughout the region. Early traders passed through the area on the Santa Fe Trail, the canyons protect the rock walls of old stage stops from the days before the railroad, and ruins of early homesteads and ranches remain to remind us of life in another era.

HistoriCorps undertook the first phase of preservation work on the Rourke Ranch barn in 2016. In the winter of 2016/2017, strong winds blew the roof off of the ranch’s calving shed, which is a beautiful stone structure. Volunteers are needed to repair the roof on this vital historic property. Come join us!

**CHALLENGE LEVEL: MEDIUM.** This site is at a relatively high altitude of approximately 6,000 feet. The primary task was **roofing**, so volunteers were ready to get on the low roof.

**WHAT:** Under the supervision and leadership of HistoriCorps’ field staff, volunteers learned and developed their skills by:

- Repairing and replacing blown-off roofing on the calving shed
- Repairing the corral’s fence, the shed’s adobe, and repainting the shed.

**WHERE:** Located within Comanche National Grassland in Colorado ([map](#)).

GPS of the project site: 37.589567,-103.647678

Nearest Town: La Junta, Colorado, roughly 20 miles away over 4WD roads and paved roads.

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